

Week Ending Friday, October 24, 2003

**Statement on Congressional Passage
of the Supplemental Funding
Request To Support the War on
Terror**

October 17, 2003

I applaud the House and Senate for passing my supplemental funding request to support our mission and our troops deployed in Afghanistan, Iraq, and elsewhere. These funds will provide the resources necessary to make Iraq more secure and support its transition to self-government, which is critical to winning the war on terror. They will also continue our efforts to help build an Afghanistan that is prosperous, democratic, and at peace, and that contributes to regional stability.

I commend the House for wisely rejecting a proposal to convert part of the reconstruction funds to loans. It is unfortunate that a closely divided Senate voted to partially substitute loans for grants. Loans are the wrong approach—they would slow the reconstruction of Iraq, delay the democratic process, and send the wrong message to both the region and the world. The loan provision must be removed in conference.

I thank Chairmen Stevens and Young for their efforts and urge the conference committee to work to resolve their differences, fully fund my request, and send me legislation I can sign quickly.

NOTE: This item was not received in time for publication in the appropriate issue.

**Interview With Taro Kimura of
Japan's FUJI TV**

October 14, 2003

The President. Glad you're here. Ready to go.

Japan's Reconstruction Aid for Iraq

Mr. Kimura. Thank you very much, Mr. President, for this interview. I'm sure Prime

Minister Koizumi is looking forward to have you over there. Actually, he is preparing a package for Iraqi reconstruction which includes \$5 billion aid for the next 4 years and sending a couple of hundred Japanese self-defense forces over there for the humanitarian operation. Do you think Japan fulfilled her responsibility with this package?

The President. Yes. I'm very pleased. Prime Minister Koizumi and I are good friends. I admire him a lot, and I spoke to him about Japan helping in Iraq, just like Japan helped in Afghanistan. And he assured me he would work hard to develop a good package. It sounds like he has done so, and I'm grateful and thankful.

We've got great relations between America and Japan. We will keep them that way. And part of good relations is we see problems, and we work together, and see opportunities. And a free Iraq is a—a peaceful Iraq is a wonderful opportunity for Japan and the United States to work together to achieve because a free and peaceful Iraq will change the world in a positive way.

North Korea/Japanese Abductees

Mr. Kimura. Another subject, Mr. President, that the Prime Minister will bring up is the North Korean problem.

The President. Yes, yes.

Mr. Kimura. And he is working very hard to resolve the issue of abductees, Japanese.

The President. Yes.

Mr. Kimura. What could your administration do to help him realizing the reunification of the abductees' status?

The President. Well, that's a very interesting question. The primary objective of the five countries who are now engaged with North Korea is to get rid of nuclear weapons on the Korean Peninsula. That's our primary objective, and that ought to be our focus.

A major issue with the Prime Minister, of course, is the abductees. I've always said that

the fact that North Korea kidnaped or abducted these people talks to the nature of the administration in North Korea. And of course, we will send strong signals that we object to that kind of behavior, that that is not a civil behavior.

But the first objective is for all of us to work together for the sake of peace and security, particularly in your part of the world, to get rid of any nuclear weapons and/or ambitions for nuclear weapons.

Mr. Kimura. For example, do you think it's possible that your administration demand North Korea to include this abduction program in whatever the comprehensive package—

The President. Well, I think it's very important. I'll talk to the Prime Minister about this, of course. I know this is a very sensitive subject, and I've spoken out about this terrible practice, a terrible part of history, that the North Koreans abducted. But the first thing we got to do is focus on our overall objective, and that is to make sure that the peninsula is nuclear weapons-free. And that's in Japan's interest, of course. And right now that's where our focus is.

Mr. Kimura. I understand—or I read Bob Woodward's book. And you've said you loathe Kim Chong-il. Do you still feel that same way?

The President. When I know a leader starves his people, allows his people to starve, and know there's detention camps and it's not a free society—it's a very, closed totalitarian society—he and I don't agree, obviously, on freedom and peace. And I hope that Kim Chong-il realizes that when five nations speak, we're very serious, and that it's in his country's interest to get rid of nuclear weapons and/or programs to develop nuclear weapons. Because the five countries that are now speaking in one voice are saying as clearly as possible to Mr. Kim Chong-il, "You need to change for your good and for the good of the country."

Monetary Policy

Mr. Kimura. There is speculation in Tokyo that you will speak to Mr. Koizumi to let dollar-yen rate float and not let the

Japanese financial institute to intervene in the market. Is this the case?

The President. Well, I will talk to him about, one, our Government's strong dollar policy. And I will remind him that our position when it comes to currency exchanges is that the market ought to decide the relative values of currencies based upon the fiscal policy of each government, the monetary policy of each government, the future economic picture of each country. And that's what I will remind him. This will not be the first time that we have discussed dollar policy and/or trade matters.

Mr. Kimura. Lastly, I remember you've enjoyed yakitori when you were in Tokyo, the barbecued chicken.

The President. Yes, I did. [Laughter]

Mr. Kimura. And I wonder whether you will bear tasting sushi this time. I know you're not really particularly in favor of the raw fish.

The President. Well, I'm a beef man. You know I like good beef. Japan's got some of the greatest beef in the world. And—but I'm also, hopefully, a good enough guest not to demand a particular menu from my host. The Prime Minister and I have eaten a lot of meals together. And I'm confident that he will put together a good meal for both the First Lady, Laura, and me. And I really am looking forward to seeing him. He is—he is a great friend. He is an interesting man. I really enjoyed being around him. You know, one of the—he came to my ranch. And he and I sat down apart from the house in a beautiful part of the ranch and had a very long discussion just on a personal basis. And it meant a lot to me. He's a leader of a great country and a great friend of the United States. And I'm grateful for our relationship.

Mr. Kimura. Thank you very much, Mr. President.

The President. Yes, sir, you're welcome.

NOTE: The interview was taped at 3:10 p.m. in the Library at the White House, and the transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on October 18. In his remarks, the President referred to Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi of Japan; and Chairman Kim Chong-il of North Korea. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this interview.

Interview With Antonio Baltazar V. Nebrida, Jr., of the Philippines' NBN TV-4

October 14, 2003

The Philippines' Role in the War on Terror

Mr. Nebrida. Mr. President, the Philippines has taken a position behind just about every initiative that the United States Government has taken against the global fight against terrorism. As a partner in this endeavor, what do you see the Philippines doing further?

The President. First of all, Gloria Arroyo, the President, has been very strong, and I appreciate that. And I appreciate my friendship with her. Secondly, the Philippines has recognized that there is a problem in parts of the country and have asked for some help, some training. And we're more than happy to provide it, because there's no question in my mind the will of the Government is to bring people to justice, and the Government has. In other words, there's a recognition of the problem and a willingness to deal with it.

I think that our relationship is such—it's a very close, longstanding relationship—is such that we will see opportunities to work together, and we will work in concert. I would never ask the Philippines to do something that the Government was comfortable doing, but our relationship is good.

And one key thing that people need to understand is that the war on terror goes on, and therefore, it's important to have leaders who understand that. And the President understands that, and I appreciate her courage.

Upcoming Elections in the Philippines

Mr. Nebrida. Continuing with the program, the Philippines is coming into a very critical phase. We're getting our national and local elections in 2004. Are there apprehensions over the exercise itself, or the outcome of the election?

The President. Well, first of all, there's no apprehension over the outcome of the election. The people—we trust the people in America. We've got our own elections, by the way, coming up in 2004. I would hope that the Philippines would continue to serve

as a good example of democracy in the region, in other words, that there be an inclusiveness and, of course, that the elections be carried off in a peaceful way. It will be a very important election for others to watch, and watch the example of the Philippines' elections. And the people will make the right decision. I know my friend is running again, and she's got a strong agenda to run on.

Filipino Americans

Mr. Nebrida. All right. Close historic links between the United States and the Philippines are seen in the very large and significant Filipino community in the United States.

The President. Yes.

Mr. Nebrida. How do you see the contribution of that particular community in nation-building here in the United States?

The President. Well, first of all, there's roughly 2 million Philippine Americans, which is a wonderful contribution to our country. These people are great people. And I know; I work with them right here in the White House. We've got some great Philippine Americans here that are proud of their country but most of all love America, because we stand for freedom and justice and opportunity. And the Philippine community has provided great contributions in business and arts and civic participation. And I'm really proud that there are that many Philippine Americans who are citizens of our great land.

Upcoming APEC Summit

Mr. Nebrida. You're heading for Thailand. The Philippines—our President is also heading for the APEC meeting there. You will be meeting each other. There are apprehensions over the emergence of bilateral agreements, trade agreements, and regional trading blocs. Is APEC still a relevant organization as far as the United States sees its allies and its partners?

The President. Yes, that's a very good question. It needs to be relevant, because APEC has—that room will fill up with leaders that can do a lot to shape a more peaceful world and a more prosperous world. Trade is a central element of our foreign policy, and many of our trading partners, like the Philippines, will be in that room. And we've